



## XI. ADDITIONAL SMALL FARMS INITIATIVES

This area of the report highlights the progress and achievements made by USDA for the reporting period and in those areas that were not specifically addressed by the Commission in its report, *A Time to Act*, and the 146 recommendations included therein.

### **Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES)**

#### ■ **CSREES Community Food Projects Grant Program (CFPCGP) Benefits Small**

**Farmers:** The program is designed to provide grants on a competitive basis to support the development of Community Food Projects to: (1) meet the food needs of low-income people; (2) increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs; and (3) promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues. Community Food Projects are intended to take a comprehensive approach to developing long-term solutions that help to ensure food security in communities by linking the food production and processing sectors to community development, economic opportunity, and environmental enhancement. Some examples of how small farms benefit from the CFPCGP are as follows:

- A 2003 grant to Ecotrust, Portland, Oregon, is funding a collaboration among Ecotrust, the Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission, and the Food Innovation Center to help 400 fisher families from 4 Indian Tribes – the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation, the Yakima Nation, and the Nez Perce Tribe—from a 4-state Columbia River region to develop value-added products from underutilized “Tule,” Chinook salmon. A canned product, “Wild Chinook Oregon Troll - Caught Direct from the Salmon Nation,” has been developed, new food products from Tule and higher-value fish are being created, and tribal members are involved in chef-to-fishermen conferences where chefs advise fisherman about what form they need fish products to be when delivered directly to restaurants.
- A 2003 grant to Community Teamwork, Inc., Lowell, Massachusetts, involves establishing a marketing cooperative to help primarily Asian immigrant farmers find viable outlets for their produce and other specialty crops, including outreach to WIC and food stamp recipients to encourage them to make purchases from these local farmers.
- A 2003 grant to the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, East Point, Georgia, is expanding existing farmer cooperatives in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina through workshops, technical assistance, strengthening direct marketing outlets and developing a cooperative marketing manual geared to the needs of Black farmers in the four states.
- A 2002 grant to Cooperative Development Services, Madison, Wisconsin, is assessing the feasibility of developing a cooperative grocery store in Barneveld, Wisconsin, which replaces a commercial grocery that closed in 2002. The cooperative grocery will offer an outlet for local farmers to sell their products.



■ **Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Program Benefits Small Farmers:** From January 2001 to May 2004, the CSREES SBIR program funded projects involving small farm workforce development and safety, stimulation to rural economies, rural business development promising new technologies that hold the potential to impact small farmers, and projects yielding promising bio-based products and processing techniques with promising commercial potential that may benefit small farmers and ranchers.

The SBIR Program provides competitive research funding to small businesses developing products, processes, and services for the diverse communities served by the USDA. These communities are represented in the SBIR Program through the following Topic Areas: Forests and Related Resources; Plant Production and Protection - Biology; Plant Production and Protection - Engineering; Animal Production and Protection; Air, Water, and Soil; Food Science and Nutrition; Rural and Community Development; Aquaculture; Industrial Applications; Marketing and Trade; Wildlife; and Animal Waste Management.

Phase I feasibility studies funded up to \$80,000 per project for 8 months may be followed by Phase II research and development projects for up to \$325,000 per project for 24 months. Some examples of SBIR Phase II projects from FYs 2002 and 2003 that relate to small farmers and ranchers include:

- A grant to Rainbow Organic Farms Company in Bronson, Kansas, to develop a certified quality system for small poultry marketing groups;
- A grant to Future Segue in Las Cruces, New Mexico, to develop a solar-powered virtual fencing system using GPS technology to control the movements of free ranging animals;
- A grant to Land EKG, Inc., in Bozeman, Montana, to develop a computerized rangeland information system that can benefit ranchers who make use of rangeland resources in the west;
- A grant to Sleepy Hollow Farm in Dalton, Georgia, to establish a viable organic goldenseal production system for small family farms;
- A grant to Scotch Hill Farms in Brodhead, Wisconsin, to develop a sustainable farmstead soap production system that is based on the use of goats milk; and
- A grant to Kini Po-Po Creations, Inc., in Hilo, Hawaii, to develop marketing strategies that will sustain an organic Hawaiian herbal tea industry.

■ **CSREES Small Farm Program Page on Newly Redesigned CSREES Web site:** The CSREES Small Farms Program site, along with 58 other programs within CSREES, will receive a face lift when the Web site is redesigned in 2004 to have a more user friendly look and feel. The new agency site, [www.csrees.usda.gov](http://www.csrees.usda.gov), will be launched on April 15, 2004. The CSREES Small Farm Program page on the CSREES Web site provides helpful information for small farmers, ranchers, and specialists who work with the small farm community.



Information is intended to help small farmers increase the economic viability of their small farm operations. The Small Farm Program page includes a toll-free information line (1-800-583-3071) which provides fast access for farmers and ranchers to CSREES small farm experts, a directory of State Small Farm Coordinators who offer assistance in programs and services to small producers, *Small Farm Digest* newsletter issues which offer direct marketing advice and information on special topics of interest to small farmers, funding sources for which small producers are eligible to apply, and other small farm links.

### ■ **3<sup>rd</sup> National Small Farm Conference Held in 2002 Focused on Helping Small Farmers:**

From September 17-20, 2002, nearly 700 participants from the public and private sectors, including community-based organizations, the Land-Grant University System, small-scale farmers and ranchers, convened in Albuquerque, New Mexico, to participate in the 3<sup>rd</sup> National Small Farm Conference.

The conference was focused on building partnerships to strengthen small farms and ranches. Special presentations and break out sessions included the importance of small family farms to agriculture and American communities; building collaborations at the Federal, State, and local government levels and connecting private and public organizations to build regional support for small farmers and ranchers; coping with farm stress; identifying research and extension priorities; beginning farmer programs; grant-writing for farmers; risk management; and sharing program successes across the Nation which offer the potential to be replicable models for other areas of the country. Participants did on-site visits to a diversity of small farm and ranch enterprises in New Mexico.

## **USDA National Office of Outreach**

### **Environmental Justice at the Department of Agriculture**

■ In accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, each Federal agency shall ensure that all programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance that affect human health of the environment do not directly, or through contractual or other arrangements, use criteria, methods, or practices that discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

Each Federal agency shall analyze the environmental effects, including human health, economic and social effects, of Federal actions including effects on minority communities and low-income communities, when the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 requires such analysis.

■ Executive Order 12898 on “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations” is designed to focus Federal attention on the environmental and human health conditions in minority and low-income communities. The Order promotes nondiscrimination in Federal programs substantially affecting human health and provides community access to public information on, and an opportunity for public participation



in, matters relating to human health or the environment. The USDA Environmental Justice program has developed an Environmental Justice Strategy and a Departmental Regulation to guide its Environmental Justice Program.

■ The National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) is the national advisory committee for the formulation of recommendations and independent advice on environmental justice. NEJAC utilizes the effective strengths and responsibilities of business, industry, State, local governments, tribal and indigenous organizations, academia, environmental organizations, grass root groups, and others involved in environmental justice matters.

■ The Interagency Working Group (IWG), comprised of 19 Federal Agencies, and mandated by Executive Order, focuses on building dynamic and proactive partnerships that access the initiatives and resources of Federal agencies to improve the quality of life of minority and low-income communities suffering disproportionate environmental impacts.

The IWG works to implement USDA's Environmental Justice Program in accordance with the Executive Order by providing guidance to Federal agencies on criteria for identifying disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on these populations. This group works under the guidelines of USDA's Environmental Justice Strategy in order to ensure that the administration's interpretation and endorsement of programs, activities, and policies are undertaken in a consistent manner.

Federal agencies have committed to a collaborative approach in order to support projects contributed by the IGA's Environmental Justice Action Plan. The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA), Office of Environmental Justice, in coordination with the Federal IWG has developed an Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model. Federal agencies utilizing this methodology have participated in the peer review panel for the selection of 15 Environmental Justice Revitalization projects. USDA is currently serving on the Revitalization Task Force for the selected projects.

### **USDA Environmental Justice initiatives have included the following initiatives:**

■ Peer Review Panels for EPA's State and Tribal Environmental Justice Grants.

■ Neutral Peer Review Panel for USDA's Office of Hazardous Waste, Hazardous Materials Management Appropriation Initiative. This initiative designates the dispersal of \$15 million over a 10-year period, specifically refocusing on increased performance and accountability.

■ Peer Review Panel for EPA's Brownfield Program, which empowers States, communities, and other stakeholders in economic development to work together to prevent, assess, safely cleanup, and reuse Brownfields in a sustainable approach to the environment. Grants have been awarded at \$75 million for this fiscal year.

■ Collaboration with the Departments of Energy, Transportation, Interior, Health and Human Services, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency in rebuilding the town of Princeville,



North Carolina. This city was devastated by the destruction of Hurricane Floyd. USDA currently has an IPA assigned to Princeville to assist the City Planner and the Mayor in its reconstruction efforts.

- ReGenesis, Inc., Spartanburg, South Carolina. Received cleanup grants for \$100,00 for hazardous substances and \$100,000 for petroleum remediation from EPA.
- National Conference for Black Mayors Technology Development Initiative. This project addresses the digital divide by making computers more accessible to small town mayors.
- Conference on the Texas /Mexican Border Coalition. The purpose of the organization is to insure survival of the smaller rural communities and to provide leadership in education, ecotourism, wildlife management, livestock, deer-herd operations and risk management.
- Natural Resource Conservation Service, Everglades Restoration Project Advisory Task Force. A South Florida Management District Taskforce was formed to advise the Everglades Restoration Commission on impacts related to environmental justice.
- Briefings on the 2002 Farm Bill on USDA's Programs and Services. The briefings were designed to highlight changes and new provisions in the 2002 Farm Bill and to acquaint USDA customers with a wide array of Agency offerings and to enable USDA to interact with a broad spectrum of customers, including small farmers, growers, landowners, municipalities, community-based organizations, and under-served customers, particularly minorities and women.
- USDA and Homeland Security presentations at the Blacks in Government Conference White House Initiatives on Historically Black Colleges and Universities to strengthen the capacity of Historically Black Colleges and Universities to excellence in education.
- White House Initiatives on Asian Americans and Asian Pacific Islanders to increase opportunities for and improve the quality of life for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders living in the United States and the U.S. and Pacific Island jurisdictions.
- Congressional Black Caucus on Environmental Justice and Health Braintrust. The focus of this National Environmental Policy Commission is to protect human health and safety, promote a clean and safe environment, assure environmental justice, and encourage environmentally sound economic development.
- Funding for the Metro Lead Collaborative Capacity Building, Community Development Program for East Saint Louis, Illinois.
- Interagency Working Group Collaborative Initiative on Environmental Justice and Minority Health Conference led by the National Institutes of Health.
- Navajo Nations/USDA Consultations on USDA and Navajo Nations issues relative to infrastructure development, outdoor recreation community resource development, and preservation of scenic resources.



## Natural Resources Conservation Service

■ NRCS National Headquarters published a guide that helps producers identify alternative income-producing agricultural enterprises and agritourism opportunities. *Taking the First Step* was developed to help farmers and ranchers through the assessment of their natural, family, and community resources to prepare for the “next step” of developing a business and marketing plan for new enterprises. The guide was published in response to requests from farmers, ranchers, and agricultural advisors.

## OKLAHOMA

■ In February 2003, NRCS officials sponsored a conference in Oklahoma City for more than 1,500 small farmers, Tribes, limited resource farmers, and historically underserved producers to provide information on the 2002 Farm Bill. Attendance was so great that a second conference was held to accommodate the overflow.

## PENNSYLVANIA

■ NRCS officials initiated the Mobile Office Pilot to increase customer service for small and limited resource farmers. Eleven field employees have been equipped with laptop computers, mobile printers, mobile desks, Geographic Positioning Systems, and digital cameras to more efficiently deliver conservation planning products. Employees include five soil conservationists, three grazing specialists, two biologists, and an engineer.

## Rural Development

### Business and Cooperative Programs

■ See Figure 3 below for FYs 2002 and 2003 funding levels for small farm, minority, and beginning farmers.

Figure 3

### Rural Development Support for Small, Minority, and Beginning Farmers

	<u>FY 2002</u>	<u>FY 2003</u>
■ Business Programs	\$18,315,006	\$17,790,981
■ Business and Industrial Guaranteed Loans	\$13,792,450	\$12,951,000
■ Intermediary Re-lending Program	- - -	- - -
■ Rural Business Enterprise Grants	\$1,544,186	\$1,501,771
■ Rural Business Opportunity Grants	\$238,370	\$183,550
■ Rural Economic Development Loans and Grants	- - -	- - -
■ Cooperative Services Programs	\$1,370,000	\$1,587,330
■ Rural Cooperative Development Grants	\$1,190,000	\$940,000
■ Value-Added Producer Grants	- - -	\$627,330
■ Cooperative Services Technical Assistance	\$180,000	\$20,000



- In FYs 1999 and 2000, 34 Rural Development State offices met or exceeded priority funding goals set for small and minority farm operators.

### **Small Farms Initiatives**

- Rural Development recruited and hired two specialists: one to focus on the needs of Native American and Alaska Native producers, ranchers and others; and one fluent in Spanish to focus on the needs of Hispanic, limited-resource producers, ranchers, or other business owners.
- Rural Development is active in outreach efforts to create awareness about the cooperative development assistance available to Native Americans.
- Cooperative staffs are active partners on the Federal Interagency Partnership for Southwest Border Colonias and the Migrant Farm worker Task Force.